



## SCOTTISH ARCTIC CLUB

### Post 2011 AGM Newsletter - February 2012

*President: Mike Lea,*

*Vice Presidents: Andrea Anderson and John Peden*

*Secretary: Iain Allison, Treasurer: Helen Thomson*

*Committee members: Chris Calver, Ronan Dugan, Chris Gilmore,  
Stella Spratley and Fraser Sutherland*

[www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk](http://www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk)

*New members are welcome: the Club is for people of all ages and nationalities who have an interest in the Arctic, particularly if they have already been, or are planning to travel there. See the web site for an application form.*

#### Papers attached relating to the 2011 AGM:

- Minutes of the AGM held at The Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William 19 November 2011
- Membership Information List – Jan 2012

Last year's list has been updated to include all new members and remove lapsed and retired members.

**Membership data may NOT be used for commercial purposes**

#### Money raised at the 2011 AGM for the Expedition Fund:

Many thanks to those who gave donations to the expedition fund along with their subscriptions. Special thanks to the late Bob Fryer whose donation of 4 tupilaker for auction raised £380. Thanks also to members who donated the splendid prizes for the raffle which raised £310, while the 'Guess the Malt Whisky' made a further £72, and sale of Jean Stenico's cards made £128. Thanks to Elizabeth and John Hay and Jean for these donations. A total of £1826 was added to the Expedition Fund during the Supper weekend.

**43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Supper  
9th to 11th November 2012  
Scotland's Hotel, Pitlochry  
Phone number 01796 484 900  
[www.crerarhotels.com](http://www.crerarhotels.com)**

For 2012 we return to Pitlochry. The Supper will be held on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The hotel has been booked for the nights of Friday 18<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>. Dinner, bed and breakfast - rate per person, per night in a double room is £52.

SAC Secretary will circulate details for supper bookings in the autumn.

Meantime **BOOK DATES** in your diaries and **RESERVE YOUR HOTEL ROOM**

#### **2012 SPRING MEET - Attadale Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

The 2012 Spring Meet of the Scottish Arctic Club will return to Attadale Lodge near Strathcarron in Wester Ross from Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> - Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012. There are 4 self-catering cottages about a mile up the glen from the lodge with its magnificent gardens. See [www.attadale.com](http://www.attadale.com). It is a marvellous area for walking with numerous interesting tracks into the hills and lochs and across passes. There is also the garden to explore and Skye, Kintail, Applecross and even Torridon are not far away. We have booked 3 of these cottages for this week. This gives accommodation for 19 persons. It will allow us to be flexible with the length of time people wish to spend there i.e. from 2 days to 7 days and also when they wish to stay.

If you are interested in this Spring Meeting see our web site or please contact the President, Mike Lea on [mikejlea@gmail.com](mailto:mikejlea@gmail.com), telephone 01768 342353

Book review

**The Watkins Boys** by Simon Courtauld,  
published in 2010 by Michael Russell,  
Wilby Hall, Norwich NR16 2JP  
ISBN 978-0-85955-318-6.

This book is a “must read” for anyone interested in Greenland exploration or how people interact under stress. My generation was brought up on the youthful audacity of Watkins and companions, most still in their mid twenties, on his two expeditions to East Greenland in 1930/31 and 1932/33, and the tragedy of his early death at the beginning of the second expedition. This book, by the nephew of one of the expedition members (Augustine Courtauld, who famously wintered alone on the ice cap), will give new insights even to those who thought they knew all there was to know about Watkins and his men (and their girls). After a short introduction to Greenland and an outline of the achievements of both expeditions the author then gives a biographical sketch of each of the main players (Watkins himself, Courtauld, Lindsay, Riley, Rymill, Scott and Spencer Chapman). He skilfully tells the story of the expeditions from their varying view points drawn from their books and diaries and comments in later life, to produce a coherent thread of narrative knitting together the seven different strands. Many in the SAC probably believe that they know the story of the expeditions; the added value of this book is that it tells us both what the members of the expedition did, at base, on the ice cap, and at sea but also in life after they came back.

The latter is a fascinating, if often sad, tale. All but one (Scott) went back to polar regions, most had a “good war”, and only one (Lindsay) died in bed of old age (having married a duchess). Otherwise, death by accident, (four-including Watkins), degenerative illness (Courtauld) and suicide (Chapman) claimed the rest. For all of them however their time with Watkins was clearly a high spot of their lives—and this book helps us to understand why.

Not that Watkins was the Greek god of the hagiographical biographies I was brought up on. The author does not shrink from criticism, based on evidence, and produces a rounded, and more believable, portrait of Watkins (and his companions) than the image which prevailed after his premature death. But he does this without detracting from the achievements of this remarkable group of men. This is a fascinating

**SAC Expedition Awards**

**We favour small independent expeditions being undertaken by people under 30 years of age with strong Scottish connections.** Only expeditions to the Arctic will be considered.

The deadline of 31 January has just passed with 9 applications but in exceptional circumstances applications may be considered at other times.

See our web site:  
[www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk](http://www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk) for an application form for the Expedition fund, and for a list of previous awards.

Donations are always welcome for the Expedition Fund.

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**Talks at the Annual Gathering and Supper in Fort William, 19 November 2011**

Some 80 members and guests enjoyed these exciting presentations. Thanks to all the contributors.

***Zooplankton phenology in Arctic waters***

Jordan Grigor, Heriot-Watt University [SAC Award]

***BSES Expedition to Svalbard, 2011***

Susanna Challinger & Jenny Newall [SAC Award]

***Canoeing down the Mackenzie River***

Stephen Doughty

***Wildlife in Alaska, 2011***

Ronan Dugan

***An Arctic Alphabet***

Nancy Campbell

***Greenland: history and ethos of ecotourism***

Sigurður Aðalsteinsson/Helena Dejak

***Mikki's Fjord Trip and Spring in Sermilik Fjord***

Douglas Anderson

Thanks to Chris Gilmore for providing the AV resources. It is hoped that some of these talks will be available on our web site.

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and rewarding book, which deserves to be more widely known and read.

**Peter Mackay**, December 2011

Simon Courtauld is a member of the Club

**Nova Zembla at the Rijksmuseum,  
Amsterdam**

Artifacts from Willem Barentsz' late 16<sup>th</sup> century expedition to find a north-east passage lay frozen in Novaya Zemlya for almost 300 hundred years. Some of these form part of a 3-month exhibition in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, running until 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012. A major part of this exhibition is the works of British artist Siân Bowen whose specialism is paper. Taking inspiration from the frozen diaries and prints discovered on Novaya Zemlya (Nova Zembla in Dutch) the artist has produced books of drawings inspired by the changing patterns of the sea ice. These books have been constructed using the methods of the 16<sup>th</sup> century originals. In another part of the exhibition she has taken an image by Gerrit de Veer, Barentsz' cabin boy, of the frame of the hut they overwintered in and a picture of the hut during the archaeological excavation. These two images then become end members in a panel of 4 sheets of paper where the image is metamorphosed from one to the other as a watermark. Barentsz died on the journey home but de Veer survived. The writing in de Veer's diaries forms the watermark of other drawings where the patterns of the ice are embossed onto the paper using pin pricks and in others gold and silver dust is sieved through these pin holes onto other sheets of embossed paper.

Having met Siân Bowen on a cruise around Svalbard a couple of years ago I was interested to see how her very many still photographs of the sea ice as well as her video clips would be converted into a artistic display. Her videos were taken by reflecting the sea ice in a Claude glass, a slightly convex blackened mirror used particularly at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by artists to give a softer look to a landscape. In the exhibit the sea ice is shown as if viewed through three adjacent portholes and actually includes some polar bear tracks. It is very interesting to see how an artist gains inspiration from Arctic artifacts and the harsh and seascapes and translates these into her own medium of paper into a series of works of art. A film, also entitled Nova Zembla, was released last November and is the first 3D film in Dutch and includes Dutch supermodel, Doutzen Kroes, in the cast.

Iain Allison,  
January 2012

**"Letter from America"**

Kathleen Cartwright writes:

I have been complaining about the long, dark winter that we have had this year in the west of Scotland with endless dull days, several storms with winds up to storm force 10 which have felled huge trees, many over a hundred years old, uprooted huge Rhododendrons and plunged us into darkness for hours, and rain, rain, rain, but I now know that this is as nothing when compared with the winter that one of our members has been experiencing! Sue Aikens lives north of the Brooks Range near the north coast of Alaska and Iain received this e-mail from her a few weeks ago.

"I am still in Kavik and having a helluva time this year. I have been sick too this year so that has made it a challenge. I passed some kidney stones a few weeks ago that there were no words to describe, just not good, but it all ended OK and I was reminded of childbirth HAHHA!! I haven't been able to leave since a year ago November and am going to try for a few weeks this spring, but it depends on the bears and when they wake up. I have had more polar bears bugging me so ... I don't know. Polar Bears are true hunters and a scary lot to have lurking about. Had my large pack of wolves try to eat me about a month ago - shone my spot light out the door and there were 14 of them all stalking the pad with 4 more coming in between the trailers. I stayed inside the tent and got ready. Hard to be the only food group sometimes. Other than that it has been awfully cold and my internet has been spotty this year. Had several weeks of -56 to -72 already and it makes tent living uncomfortable"

So, no more complaints from me about the weather here in Scotland this winter.

<p><b>Web site</b></p> <p>Fraser Sutherland has assumed responsibility for keeping the web site up to date. Louise Scott who has been maintaining the site up till now will provide Fraser with some training through her web consultancy and training company, Tidalfire. The Club now has a presence on the social media sites Facebook and Twitter. So, for those members who know how such sites work, please 'like' us on Facebook: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/scottisharcticclub">www.facebook.com/scottisharcticclub</a> and 'follow' us on Twitter: @ScotArcticClub – <a href="http://www.twitter.com/scotarcticclub">www.twitter.com/scotarcticclub</a>.</p>	<p><b>BSES Svalbard 2011 incident with polar bear</b></p> <p>On the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2011, a polar bear attacked a BSES camp on Von Postbreen, in Svalbard. Horatio Chapple, one of the young explorers was killed and 4 others, including the two leaders, were seriously injured. The independent inquiry set up by BSES into the accident will report shortly. Individual donations can be made to the memorial fund in his honour at: <a href="http://www.mycharitypage.com/HoratioChappleMemorialFund/">www.mycharitypage.com/HoratioChappleMemorialFund/</a></p> <p>The Club has sent a donation of £100. This has not come out of general funds but from earmarked donations from members specifically for this memorial fund.</p>
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**Note from the Secretary**

A big 'thank you' to all the committee for their hard work during the year and who made the Annual Gathering and Supper such an enjoyable event. Liz Patterson leaves the committee and Fraser Sutherland joins. This is your newsletter, so please send me items for inclusion which will interest the membership.